

A NAME GAME

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When I was at Princeton, we called it the Princeton Name Game and argued that the challenge was to invent a name that would completely conquer the admissions director and gain the bearer instant acceptance. The method was to put together the names (and presumably the impressiveness) of two or more famous people: Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson Davis, for instance, would produce Thomas Jefferson Davis. Today Princeton is co-educational, so I suppose we might consider Marlo Thomas Jefferson Davis. I was reminded of this old but amusing pastime when New York magazine, which regularly runs competitions challenging verbal skill, revived it. Here's how we play the game: I'll give you the description of the person and you see if you can catch the name. A transvestite ex-CIA head? Boy George Bush. OK? Let's go.

1. A piano-playing, sensitively Southern American writing president
2. A blind, black, piano-playing master of dad photography
3. A titled friend of Noel Coward who has experience as a telephone operator
4. A tennis-playing mad monarch of a lady
5. A singing and poetic fellow who is good for what ails you
6. A man who might get blacks to start fancy department stores back in Africa
7. A patriotic novelist and poet, not just Catholic but Jesuit
8. A man who put the soft drink back on its feet and may run for president
9. A right-wing cynical French epigrammatist
10. A lexicographer who featured the letters E and T
11. A baseball-playing comedienne
12. A Southern general who fired several shots heard round the political world
13. A funny financial expert interested in telethons and television
14. A singing comedienne
15. A very young man interested in talking animals and the rich and famous
16. A stream-of-consciousness early Irish patriot
17. A dapper Hollywood leading man who writes both impenetrable and comic Irish novels
18. A foul-mouthed comedian who performs rock music
19. A clarinet-playing radio personality with two comic talents
20. A novelist, poet, and financial expert
21. A detective of the organization man stripe

22. A patriotic and beautiful pirate
23. A young actor, handsome but with only one ear
24. A painter, poet, and Nobel laureate in economics
25. A-one, A-two, and seven pillars of wisdom
26. A teenage idol and action painter
27. A Gallic woman able to sing both opera and pop
28. A biographer of Napoleon who also composes music
29. A movie star with two strings to her bow, if papistical
30. A feminist and actress once married to Ruth Gordon

Baffled? Answers are in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

WORDS TO RHYME WITH

*In compiling Words to Rhyme With (Facts on File Publications, 1986; \$40), Willard Espy undertook a thankless task. Dictionary-making is a labor too great for a single author to do with complete accuracy (Samuel Johnson, who ought to know, said "Dictionaries are like watches; the worst is better than none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true"). Rhyming dictionaries, dealing with the vagaries of pronunciation, are especially frustrating to compile. It is all-too-easy for the reviewer to cite nits (why does *Franglais* rhyme with gangly? Why is *thinks* listed under INGKS, when it can be inferred from the note telling one to pluralize INGK words?).*

*A more basic quarrel with rhyming dictionaries: why do they classify words such as *discourteous* and *carniverous*, or *regency* and *Timothy*, or *banishment* and *government*, as having single or masculine rhyme (accent on the last syllable)? Because of this, each of these pairs is considered a legitimate rhyme.*

*Let's focus instead on more positive things: the comprehensiveness of Espy's book (he has some 80,000 rhyming words to Clement Wood's 70,000), its up-to-dateness (Wood's book, the last American rhyming dictionary, is 50 years old), and its thorough discussion of prosody, splendidly illustrated by Espy's own verses. A nice feature: Espy places together all words having the same preceding consonant-group (as *FRinge*, *beFRinge*, *unFRinge*), cautioning the reader that these are not rhyming words; one must use words having different consonant-groups (as *FRinge*, *Singe*, *CRinge*). Finally, logologists should especially appreciate the 13 pages of Espy light verse devoted to wordplay, some of which has previously appeared in *Word Ways*.*